

11-1-2012

## Access, November 2012

San Jose State University, School of Journalism and Mass Communications

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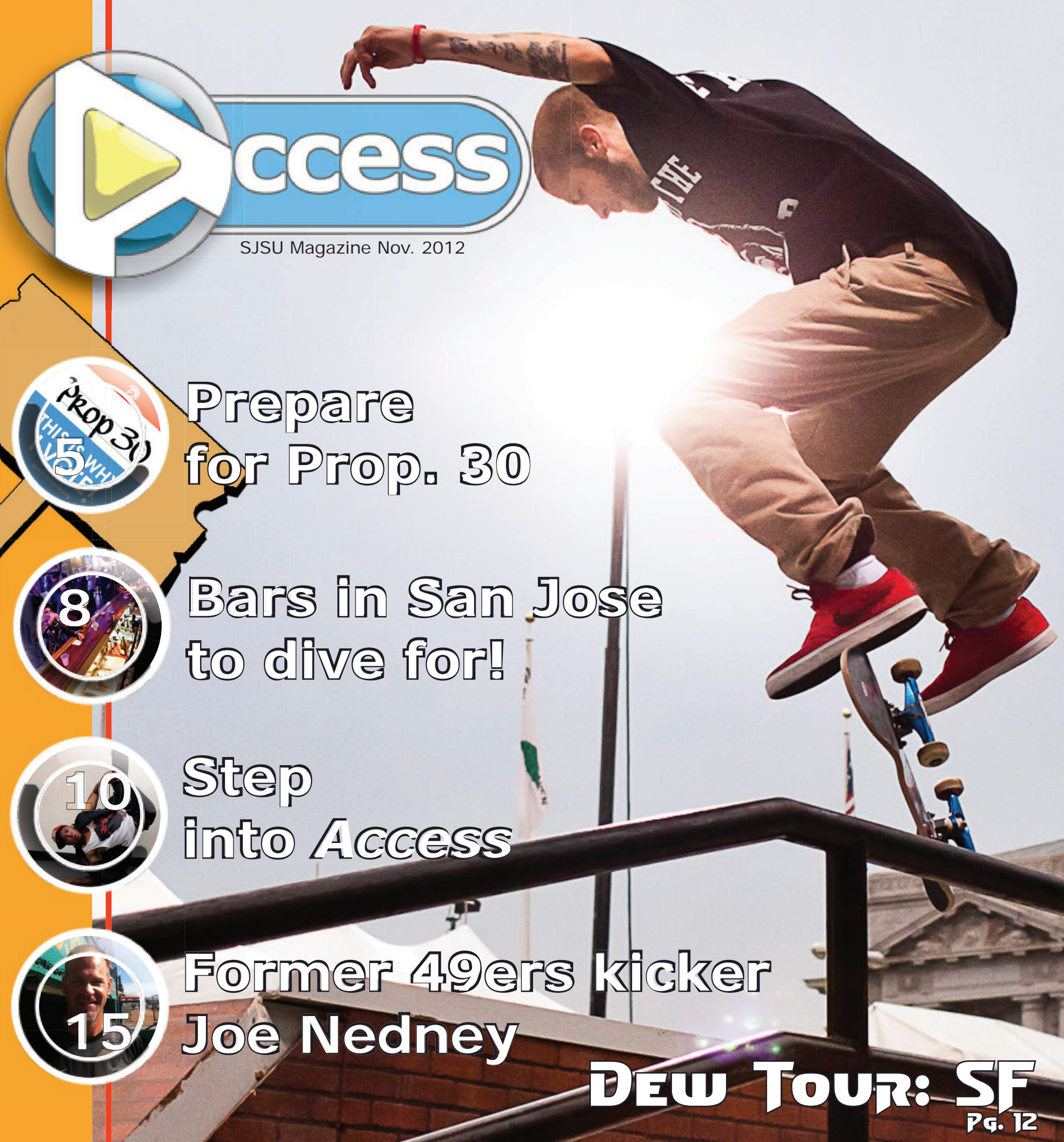
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SJSU Magazine Nov. 2012



Prepare  
for Prop. 30



Bars in San Jose  
to dive for!



Step  
into *Access*



Former 49ers kicker  
Joe Nedney

**DEW Tour: SF**  
Pg. 12





Play

Sync

| Title                    | #  | Length | Genre       |
|--------------------------|----|--------|-------------|
| Mic Check                | 4  | 2:45   | Karaoke     |
| Proposition 30           | 5  | 9:55   | Voting      |
| Access Knows Dives       | 8  | 5:27   | Poster      |
| Different Steps          | 10 | 4:23   | Interviews  |
| Dew Tour: SF             | 12 | 5:01   | Photo Essay |
| Kickin' It w/ Joe Nedney | 15 | 4:30   | Sports      |
| Entering the M8trix      | 16 | 5:17   | Gambling    |

Cover and pages 2 and 3 background photos: Raphael Kluzniok

## Access Band



Top: Chris Marian (copy editor), Vince Ei (editor-in-chief), Tim Mitchell (adviser), Angela Medina (events editor)  
Middle: David Wong (photo/art editor), Jazmine Ancira (managing editor), Ryan Fernandez (copy editor)  
Bottom: Jeffro Rosalejos (advertising coordinator/liaison), Sarah Kenoyer (features editor), Colin Rickard (art director), Julie Vu (copy editor)  
Not shown: Michelle Olmstead (copy editor)

## Notes



want and it all boils down to a nationwide costume contest.

Halloween was a week ago, but with this issue of Access Magazine, you can continue putting on different identities. One of them is retired San Francisco 49ers placekicker, Joe Nedney. At a position that gets taken for granted, he was one of the few to gain the appreciation he deserved. Another is Ryan Nyquist, who just competed in the Dew Tour in San Francisco. In the contest, he competed against competitors almost half his age, but still came out on top and showed that big air is not just for youngsters.

You'll delve into the minds of two dancers: Gabriel Mata, who creates magnificent movements with a free-flowing form of delicate but strong gestures and Krisuan Rosalejos who moves with quick footsteps — some steps not even on foot, but on the palms of his hands.

In another article, you'll find yourself in local dive bars where numerous characters reside and are not entirely who they seem. People of different occupations, ages and financial situations gather in these dens of this engrossing city. Another destination finds you in the newly opened Casino M8trix with a revealing narrative that gives you a glimpse of its patrons.

It is the first time working on a magazine for all of us. We were unsure of what to expect and all we had was our passion for writing and graphic design. We were able to come together and create this great issue that we hope will share a part of our character with you, and we are hiding behind no costumes.

*Vince Ei*

Vince Ei  
Editor-in-Chief

## November Playlist

### Holidays

- 6** Election Day
- 11** Veterans Day
- 22** Thanksgiving Day

### Music/Dance

- 7** Sea Wolf @ Rio Theater
- 10** Wiz Khalifa  
@ SJSU Event Center
- 17** Nor Cal Prelude  
@ Chabot College
- 19** Nas & Lauryn Hill  
@ the Fox Theater
- 23** As I Lay Dying  
@ the Regency Ballroom

### Comedians

- 16** Kat Williams @ Oracle Arena
- 18** Russell Peters @ HP Pavilion





## Mic Check

by Jonathan Hamilton

**San Jose's** Japantown has always possessed a distinct neatness and flavor to the buildings, as if it is cleaned every day of regular wear and tear — even the air smells cleaner. Within minutes, I find the fabled karaoke lounge: 7 Bamboo. A low hum emanates from the orange neon lights in the window that spell out “Karaoke” with a blue stylized microphone next to it.

The photographer, Patrick, arrives and we steel ourselves to go in. We follow the signs to the back of the building and choose the correct door and enter. The first

thing I notice is the darkness of the lounge — the ceiling lights are completely shut off save for a couple over the tiny stage in the corner. Some strings of lights line the outer edges of the room. Though it is a dollar per song to sing karaoke, I am not planning on buying any drinks and set up my account on the computer.

After a few other customers sing their songs, it is my turn to sing my selection: “Brown Derby Jump” by The Cherry Popping Daddies. As I walk up to the stage, I manage to forget how the song goes, only to remember that the lyrics print themselves on the screen in front of me. Despite all of this negativity going on in my mind, however, I see people clapping to the beat of the song, smiles on their faces and drinks in hand. My performance is utter trash, and everyone in the lounge is loving the hell out of it. I give a nervous bow and sit down at the table with Patrick. As the next singer steps up to the mic, I begin to make plans to come back next week.



For the full story from Jonathan Hamilton scan the code above



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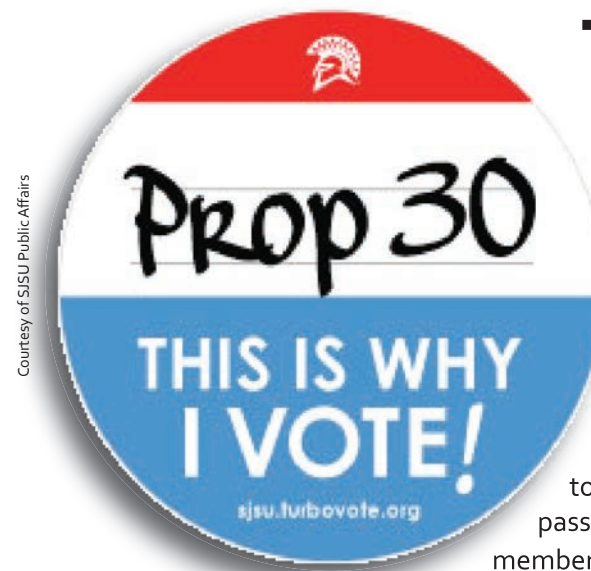
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Courtesy of SJSU Public Affairs

# Temporary taxes to fund education

Teachers will be continuing to get checks instead of pink slips if Proposition 30 passes. With Proposition 30, unless you're making \$250,000 or more, you won't be taxed more. The only negative affect is the raised sales tax but, as one ad puts it, you're paying just one cent more for a four-dollar burger. Our collective pennies will help fund not just San Jose State and its teachers but schools across California.

Professor Scott Fosdick's Journalism 132C Class is one of many exceptions to the standard curriculum-based lectures that we endure. We at Access believe passing Proposition 30 is the best way to keep these teachers, because each of our staff members have been positively affected by teachers like the ones in this article.

## Designing the Industry

Photo and Story  
by Tanya Mutz

**Ronald Boeder  
prepares students to  
take on the industrial  
design industry**



Ronald Boeder

Inside the industrial design factory, workers pace, high-powered air compressors roar and the smell of melting plastic fills the air, but most importantly, are the lit-up eyes of Ronald

Boeder's students as they watch things being made. A trip to an industrial design firm isn't out of the ordinary for Professor Ronald Boeder's Materials, Process, and Technology class at San Jose State

University. In fact, they visit a new manufacturer every week. Boeder brings a hands-on approach to his students. “There are a lot of YouTube videos out there, but nothing can replace hearing the sounds or smelling the

McClusky, a fellow industrial design professor at SJSU, said, “Not only do our students learn a great deal in the classes he has been teaching, some of them have learned even more from him on the job, as he has hired a few of our past students as interns, contract employees and full-time employees.” Boeder really knows his stuff agreed students Daniel Chaffee and Samuel Backes.

“The classes that he teaches are crucial to the industrial design major,” said student Lauren Davison — including his Visualization I class, an intensive mechanical drawing course that covers quick sketching, lighting, and shadow.

“I love teaching this course because I see such a huge improvement in just one semester,” said Boeder.



Ronald Boeder

“The impact of Ron's teaching can be witnessed in our students' portfolios as well as how much more knowledgeable they are about materials and manufacturing processes since we...hired Ron to teach it.”  
-John McClusky

It's all about the experience. Boeder is the founder and director of Exodesign, his own product development and design strategy firm. John



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## Symphony Comes Alive!

Photo and Story  
by Cynthia Patrick

**Talented New York composer and conductor breathes fresh energy into San Jose State's Music Department.**

The room is charged as his body sways with the melody of the violins. As he marks out the tempo, the dark-haired 32-year-old jumps to his toes, pointing his baton at the percussion section. His eyes, hands and body are totally animated as he communicates in a private language with each of the 35 musicians on stage.

Michael DiGiacinto is San Jose State's new music director of orchestra and opera theater. He learned of the opening last May from Jeffrey Benson, the director of choral activities. The two have been friends for 14 years, since they earned their undergraduate degrees together at NYU. Benson says he told his friend: "I know this is probably crazy, but would you be interested in applying?" By August, DiGiacinto was on a plane headed for a new life in California.

DiGiacinto's compositions have been performed throughout the United States and Europe as well as on NPR and PBS. He has conducted more than 100 premieres of new music for ensembles ranging from chamber groups to orchestras and choirs.



Michael DiGiacinto

"He can conduct the orchestra and teach theory and work with the opera students," Benson says. "He's kind of able to do it all."

"One day I'm teaching singers and working with the opera, the next I'm with the

orchestra," DiGiacinto says.

Marilyn Winkle, a graduate cello player, says DiGiacinto has a new and exciting energy that is refreshing for the musicians. As director of the Young Musicians Project, a program that provides private lessons to at-risk youth, she is especially intrigued by his plans to build up the music program. DiGiacinto says he feels like a kindred spirit here in the department with his colleagues because, although this is a state school, the professors all expect conservatory quality and the students are rising to the occasion.

"They know that I have their best interest in mind, even when I'm being tough on them," he says.

Benson says San Jose State has one of the strongest music programs in northern California. Actively recruiting the best students and connecting with teachers at local schools and community colleges is the "lifeblood" that keeps the program viable.

## Theater Soup

Photo and Story  
by Laura Nguyen

**One instructor and the ability to marry Shakespeare, hip-hop, and hands-on experience in her classrooms.**

Some students laugh amongst each other as their laptops brighten their grins.

Kathleen Normington continues to lead a discussion in her theater appreciation class. She says it isn't always easy to reach out to her general education class, but without a doubt, it's her favorite to teach this semester because of all the new minds she hopes to introduce to theater. She has a passionate energy about theater that shows as she encourages students to speak up and

guides them to find the right words.

"Right, Right!" she goads them on. Another answer comes from across the room—"Perfect!" she reassures.

She engages with her students in

the art of acting, which she has been perfecting over the past 30 years of her career as an actress. She encourages students and does her best to encounter the discouragement of not being able to develop a character; telling students that being a "good actor" is something you can learn.



Kathleen Normington

She implements a one-minute play assignment into the theater appreciation course, so that groups of students may write and direct their own short plays. Allowing them to get outside of their comfort zones and interact with their peers.

Aside from the main stage productions that Kathleen has directed, such as Emma in spring 2012, she has been known for her innovative collaboration with another SJSU professor to create the Shakespeare Project that set up a few scenes around campus to draw attention to plays by Shakespeare.

Emma Feeney, a junior musical theater major, took Kathleen's voice and movement class last semester and is now in her advanced acting class.

Feeney says that she would take a class with her again because Kathleen is "so experienced, she understands what is needed and what she needs to do in class to benefit the students." She gets her students motivated and welcomes all sorts of new theater forms, like hip-hop theater, which can incorporate modern dance and acting.

Kathleen goes above and beyond for Emma and other students in her advanced acting class by personally emailing them a critique which Feeney really appreciates, saying, "You can tell she's disappointed, but she doesn't make you feel like crap about it...It tells me what she wants and that'll make me a better actor."

Most people don't see what the theater department can contribute, but Kathleen says that you don't have to be an artist to understand the beauty that theater and art have to offer.

## Music for the Soul

Photo and Story  
by Stephanie Wong



Frank Sumares

**There's often a fine line between work and play, but no one says you can't mix both. Students in Frank Sumares' Jazz Improvisation class learn and laugh at the same time.**

Laughter and music coming from classrooms are often a rarity, but not for jazz studies instructor Frank Sumares. Sitting on a piano bench, he begins playing a tune as he cues in his jazz improvisation students, who get ready to play and sing along, "One, two, a one, two, tres, cuatro!"

Having many years of teaching and performing experience under his belt, he has been educating students at his alma mater for 12 years.

Professor Sumares encourages students to perform solos during class, and praises them with feedback, which provides an unintimidating atmosphere. Jazz Improvisation

student Cathy Williams said, "He's not pretentious, that's what you want in a teacher, someone who helps you grow."

Teacher layoffs are unfortunate, but are even more upsetting if it happens to an instructor who gives back so much, like Professor Sumares. In the words of Dr. Aaron Lington, Jazz Studies Coordinator, "It would be premature to say that any specific part-

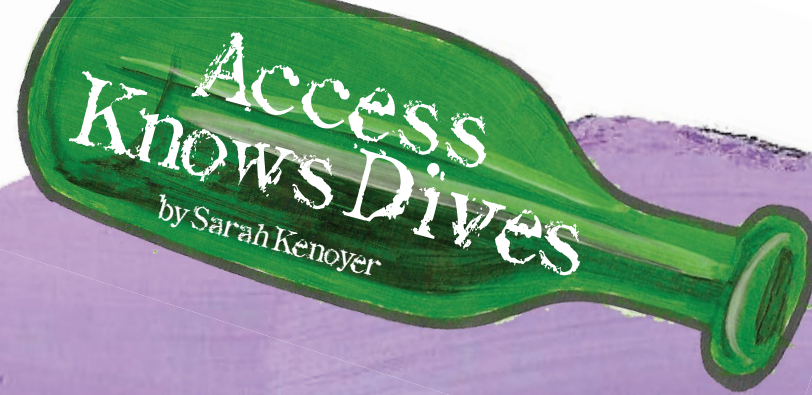
time instructor would get a pink slip if Proposition 30 did not pass."

Joseph Frank, director of the School of Music and Dance, said, "Professor Sumares brings experience and performer's enthusiasm to his teaching." Frank stresses that Professor Sumares' experience would be hard to replace.

Talented instructors are hard to come by, which is why Professor Sumares is such a gem to the music department.

"I'm not worried about myself. I'm retired, so this is just cream on top of the coffee. I'm worried about new part-timers."  
-Professor Frank Sumares






## Cinebar

Dive Rating: 

"It's the drinks," Rachel VanDusen says about being a regular at Cinebar. "They're cheap and strong. Really, really strong."

She speaks the truth. A vodka tonic at Cinebar tastes like it's three parts rubbing alcohol. VanDusen says it's familiar faces that also that make a bar great. Maybe that's why it's so difficult to infiltrate the social scene at Cinebar. People are categorically divided into subgroups. You have your rockabilly kids here, your skate punks over there, and a few men in collared shirts, looking lost. But none of it's important. What's important is poor quality and large quantity of alcohol that customers consume. Cinebar excels at nothing more than being a grungy watering hole. It really isn't the best place to go for a good time, but for being the truest dive bar reviewed, it deserves five glasses.

## Caravan

Dive Rating: 

Caravan can be summed up as this: white trash meets hipster. A bartender in a Cramps T-shirt serves tall cans of Pabst while patrons with facial piercings wait to hear Friday night's act, the San Francisco metal band Repaid in Blood.

"I like the vibe. It's our favorite place to play in San Jose," says drummer Jordon Norton (sure about this? not will sharmen?). While food isn't typically served at dive bars, Caravan offers a selection of Lay's Potato Chips behind the bar. It is apparent that they value their customers. A box reading "questions, comments, concerns" is exhibited at the front door. If patron J.B. Charlot were to provide a suggestion, he would tell Caravan to keep doing what they do.


"I remember seeing a guy in a suit and tie at a metal show here," he says. "Whoever you are, people don't give a f---."

## Freddie J's

Dive Rating: 

At 9 p.m., you might find a middle-aged man in a sports coat and button-up shirt drinking alone and watching recaps of the day's sports games on a TV positioned above the wooden shelf adorned with liquor. The décor is reminiscent of that of a coffee shop, with standard, uninspiring prints of guitars and abstracts. This early evening impression is deceptive, for like Dive Bar, Freddy J's is electrified late at night. A DJ spins Tag Team's "Whoomp, There It Is" while on the dance floor adjacent to the bar, girls in tight dresses, heels and fluttering false eyelashes hold cocktails in one hand and raise the roof with the other.

## Johnny V's

Dive Rating: 

Note: the more people smoking cigarettes outside, the hipper the place. Since the VooDoo Lounge closed, Johnny V's has picked up the slack as downtown San Jose's venue for diverse live music.

"(Caravan's) is mostly metal and punk," says bartender Howard Ferrel. "We're the only club that caters to all types of music — hip hop, dub step, surf rock, anything." Tonight, people wearing horn-rimmed glasses and hoodies are elbow to elbow in the crowded dark room under black lights. They are anticipating tonight's act, San Francisco punk band Parachute On Fire. Band member Damien Castaneda says he thinks the dark crowdedness serves the bar's quirky vibe.

"I'd rather play a dive than a bistro," he says. In addition to live music, Johnny V's has karaoke on Wednesday, as well as turntables customers can use to "battle" each other.

## Dive Bar

Dive Rating: 

Of all the bars reviewed, Dive Bar inarguably has the cleverest name. Dive Bar's exterior sports a neon sign of a woman in a swimsuit and swim cap plunging toward the sidewalk. The interior is equally as inviting. There are neatly arranged bottles of Absolut on a rich wooden shelf. High chairs and brass footrests are reminiscent of a western saloon, while Christmas light chandeliers fuse traditional with trendy. As clever as its name is, Dive Bar is inaptly named because of all the true dive bars covered here, it's the least dive-y. At 8 p.m. on any night of the week, you'll find only a handful of customers, as diverse as the décor, drinking at the bar. But walk in at midnight on a Friday or Saturday night and the bar turns into a lively dance club.





## Gabriel Mata

Interviewed by: Angela Medina

Some dancers are born, others are trained. San Jose State student Gabriel Mata is amongst those who were born to dance. With only five years of contemporary and modern dance behind him, Mata has accomplished much in his budding career.

### How did you get into dancing?

My intention wasn't to audition, but my friend wanted to audition for the high school dance team. She ... wanted me to remember choreography for her. In the end, I ended up auditioning and I didn't make it to the team ... So I didn't start (dancing) until the beginning of my junior year in high school, with a beginning class, and I loved it. Then I auditioned in my senior year and I made it to the team.

### What does dancing bring to you?

It's a mix of emotions because some days I'll be like "Urg! I suck, my body is not the way I want it to be." But that's not it. In the end, it ends up being very rewarding.

### How do you feel when you're performing on stage?

I went through this whole phase where I had to get everything perfect, but now I've just realized that that's very stressful, and ... I've learned to let it go and not that I have to get every performance on the spot. I do try for that, (but) I go for a different approach to it mentally.

### Do you have any special rituals before you dance on stage?

I just always try to be calm. I'm always eating during performances even though we're not suppose to. That helps. It calms me down ... have some tea.

### How do you intend to make a career out of dance?

I want to have Gary Masters' job. He had the chance to work with the

company, now in his later life he's working at a university. He's in charge of SJ Dance Co. I love his job. That's the ideal job for me. I have different ideas at the moment. I know I want to (do) choreography, but also with that, I want to have my own all-male company. That'd be really interesting. I'd also like to work with Shen Wei Dance Arts. They're based in New York, so that'd be pretty awesome. They opened the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and it was great.

### How did you start choreographing?

I started in high school with the team. I was able to make my own piece. It was great. Then, from that, I was able to make two other pieces for the high school once I graduated. Then I started in college taking a choreography class.

### Where do you get your inspiration for choreographing?

I go to a lot of art galleries, so if I see a painting, that might inspire me. The colors, textures of the canvas, or if it's a sculpture. I also try to find inspiration through music, not just dance (music). Also, an idea, a quote or story. All of that.

### How do you feel when you see other styles of dancing?

I just started taking tap. I never thought I would do tap. I've started a one-semester course. I can't judge something until I've actually tried it.

I've seen some great (hip-hop) performances and some off performance. It goes for every genre. I find it (interesting).



# Different Steps

## Krisuan Rosalejos

Interviewed by: Jeffro Rosalejos

For Krisuan Rosalejos, dancing has always been something innate. Progressing from dancer to choreographer and now director of his own dance company, Rosalejos has been invited to do one thing he has longed for in his dancing career: the Carnival Choreographer's Ball.

At the top of his game, he gives us insight to his accomplishments and struggles.

### What goes through your mind the minute before you step on stage?

Just hoping I don't mess up [laughs]. The most important thing is, I have to remind myself of the very first move. If I get that right, then everything else flows together.

When was the first time you thought of being a dancer?

A dancer, well...I believe as I was between 5 to 9 years of age. My cousin taught me how to dance and since then it just stuck with me. Since then I've been dancing professionally for eight years.

### How long does it take for you to prepare for a stage performance?

Depends. If I'm working with a dance company, between two to three months rehearsing about two to three times a

week at about three hours per rehearsal day. If I'm working as an industry dancer, then three days a week at five hours each.

### What is your number one goal in the dance scene?

My recent goal was to introduce my own name as a choreographer at the Carnival Choreographers Ball which I will be attending on Sept. 25, 2012, in Hollywood. It is the biggest show in the world that showcases the top choreographers of the music, video and film industry.

### Do you think other people dance for fame and money or for the love of dance?

I think it's up to their preference. Some want it all. I love the fame and money. They're the perks of being a great dancer, but you have to remember your roots. I would do it for free, so I pick the love of dance.

### What are the differences between dance divisions such as Studios, Community and Industry?

Studio focuses on regional national competitions that involve little girls doing tap and ballet and they all compete against hip-hop. With Community, you see all the dance crews from tv and your competition scene... it is more raw from the streets. Industry involves dancers from just music videos, movies, and tours.

### How does hip-hop affect your life?

This is a pretty long answer, but to sum it up: hip-hop is not just a dance, but it's a culture. We live it in our everyday life and it's positive, not this gang violence stuff. hip-hop is about the way of life and living to the fullest.



Photos: Jessica Olthof  
Illustration: Colin Rickard





Story and photos  
by Raphael Kluzniok

Photo: Raphael Kluzniok  
Illustration: Colin Rickard

BMX legend and San José native Ryan Nyquist took first place in the BMX Dirt Jumping at the October Dew Tour City Championships in San Francisco. Nyquist was the third-place qualifier behind Ryan Foster and TJ Ellis. In the finals, a best-of-three-scores competition, Nyquist was tied with up-and-coming rider TJ Ellis until their final attempts when Nyquist scored a 90.87 and Ellis an 89.19.



Ryan Nyquist celebrates his win atop the drop-in ramp (above).

Nyquist spots his landing mid backflip in BMX finals practice (left).

Left to right, TJ Ellis, Ryan Nyquist and Colton Satterfield celebrate a podium finish after the BMX Dirt finals (below).







A BMX dirt jumper appears to soar over spectators and Sutro tower at sunset, over the S.F. DewTour City Championships.

# College Night Thursdays at the New

B L U S H  
R A W B A R ♦ L O U N G E



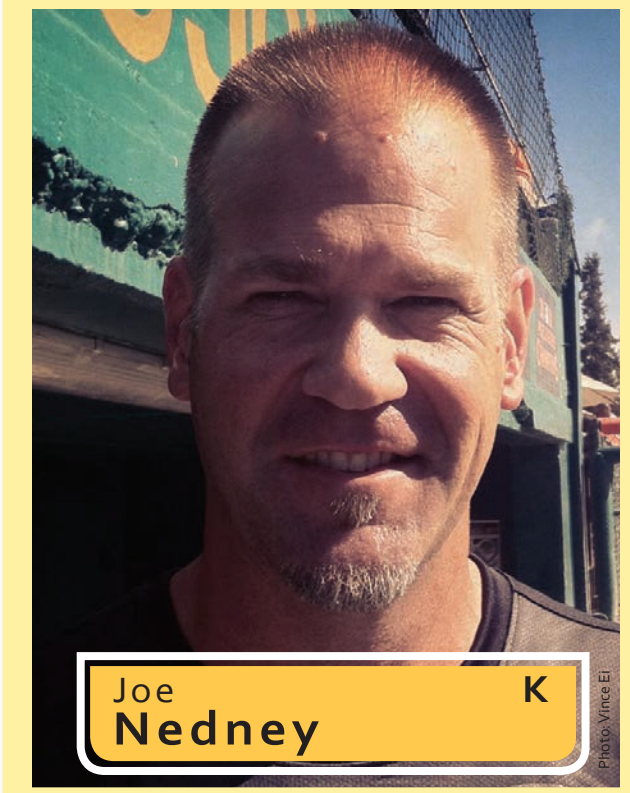
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Joe Nedney K

### FAST FACTS

| SJSU 1991-1994      |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| Longest FG          | 60 Yards*  |
| Points Scored       | 236*       |
| Completed FG        | 55.7%      |
| PATs Made           | 90         |
| NFL Career          |            |
| Longest FG          | 56 Yards   |
| Completed FG        | 80.3%      |
| PATs Made           | 99.1% **   |
| Kick Offs: Total    | 28.5 mi.** |
| San Francisco 49ers |            |
| Completed FG        | 86%        |
| PATs Made           | 100%       |

\*School record  
\*\*Career best



# Kickin' It

Story: Vince Ei

It's really weird seeing Joe Nedney use his hands rather than his feet. The former San Francisco 49ers placekicker is a goalie in the Brandi Chastain All-Star Celebrity Soccer Event. Even in the midst of some talented soccer players like Chastain, former World Cup golden boot winner Sissi, and Kristine Lilly, who scored the third most goals for the U.S. Women's National team, Nedney has the strongest leg, no doubt. The retired NFL placekicker has a dependable and accurate foot proven by 15 years in the NFL, the last five with the 49ers.

Nedney actually didn't kick his longest field goal in the NFL but in college when he attended San Jose State. His 60-yard game winning field goal against the University of Wyoming remained the longest made field goal of his playing experience though he came close in his professional career with a kick just four yards shy. But his ties to his alma mater don't end with that highlight. "I went back to visit Coach MacIntyre and the team during spring time and spent a couple of days during spring working out with the spartan specialists. They are doing very well, it's fun to watch and they got a good product on the field so I'm excited for them."

The football team isn't the only thing

that's undergone a little reconstruction. "The campus has gone through major reconstruction over the years since I been there, so every time I step foot on campus I always notice a lot of the changes and the improvements. It's changed a lot and it's all positive." He recalls the days when San Carlos Street cut through the campus and how Spartan Stadium's former glory has been preserved.

Two years removed from professional football, Nedney continues to stay involved with his old team and vocation. He will be on episodes of 49ers Central on Comcast SportsNet Bay Area and hopes to eventually offer youth place kicking and punting lessons by hosting his own clinic. But as much as he enjoys his involvement in football, he can now find time to be "in the position to be dad and hang out with my kids and help out with my grandparents and really help with the family."

Almost halfway through the first half of the soccer match, Nedney finally shows off that powerful leg. The same leg that was the silver lining through the years of turmoil where the 49ers did not make the playoffs. Coming off the abysmal 2004 campaign by head coach Dennis Erickson, Nedney arrived and gave fans most of the worthwhile memories between the 2005

and 2010 seasons during the unsuccessful Mike Nolan and Mike Singletary eras. Alex Smith was not what we now know him to be and our defense was just being assembled. In numerous games Nedney scored all the points. Kicking the ball through the uprights was the only way to get the ball into the end zone. The soccer ball went the length of the field, it wasn't high enough but it had the distance. Still, a joyous Chastain raised both her hands in the air to indicate a made field goal anyway for old time's sake.

If the 49ers kept him one more year, he would have experienced the complete turnaround the team made that had football analysts across the nation astounded. If he stayed just two more years playing in this current season, he would have made NFL history by kicking a 63-yard field goal, an NFL record and personal best. But what could've been doesn't dwell in Nedney's mind. "I miss the game. I don't feel left out. I had the privilege [of being] able play 15 years at the pro level and I'm proud and I'm at peace with everything."

Photo: SJSU Athletics



# ENTERING THE M8TRIX

Approaching the casino from Matrix Boulevard, I see a neon sign pulsating from blue to pink on the top story of an eight-floor building towering above the drab Fairfield Inn located across the street. The parking lot is packed on a Saturday night, with cars ranging from pedestrian Hondas and Hyundais to relatively modest Mercedes and Lexuses. I say these luxury cars are “relatively modest” because every so often I spot an Audi, or as is the case with one vehicle parked at the entrance, a Bentley sports car.

The stone wall at the front of the ascending building trickles water down into a bed of plants. Tall and wide glass doors receive people wearing anything from jeans and t-shirts to women in tight, black dresses and heels accompanied by men in sportcoats. I don’t know if the reason they don’t ask to see my ID at the entrance is whether I look mature or not worth their time.

Inside the casino, there are chandeliers covered in violet cloth, the ruffles at the hem resembling jellyfish. At least I think they looked like jellyfish — maybe this image is suggested by the pungent, fishy odor lingering in the aftermath of prolific use of ammonia cleaning products — the cost of sterility.

That’s one thing to be said about the M8trix — it’s sterile. You won’t find the dirty patterned carpet or constant ringing of slot machines in Tahoe or Reno. I kind of long for the comfort of that frenetic activity; I feel inexplicably conspicuous at the M8trix.

I’m also painfully sober.

The only bar in the casino is a sports bar with multiple, large flat-screen TVs displaying sports games — games of what, I don’t really remember. My only impression of the bar is how unimpressive it

is. It’s undifferentiated from the numerous bars of its kind you’ll find in downtown San Jose — not a place worthy of a little black dress.

After I have a mojito, I wander from blackjack tables to poker tables, intending to find one where I can blow \$20. I’m already out of luck. The tables are full and the buy-in is \$30. I find a seat at a blackjack table next to a middle-aged man smirking at his cards. He tells me I can occupy the seat until his friend comes back.

I only intend to watch.

One of my lessons in Catholic school was that voyeurism is a vice, and I came here to sin.

I’m failing miserably at it.

I introduce myself to the man who gave me a seat. His name is Sean and Sean is toasted. When he speaks, it sounds like someone rolled over his tongue with a Bentley. He tells me he’s the CEO of his

**STORY: SARAH KENOYER**  
**ILLUSTRATIONS: KURT SALINAS**

own software company, that he crunches numbers all day, number crunching is fun, and blackjack is fun. I tell him I’m a student.

“You think you’re smart,” he slurs. I blink like an idiot and say nothing. He proceeds to tell me I’m not smart, that I’m an ant. He sits on an anthill all day and the rest of us are worthless. I leave my seat next to him without saying another word.

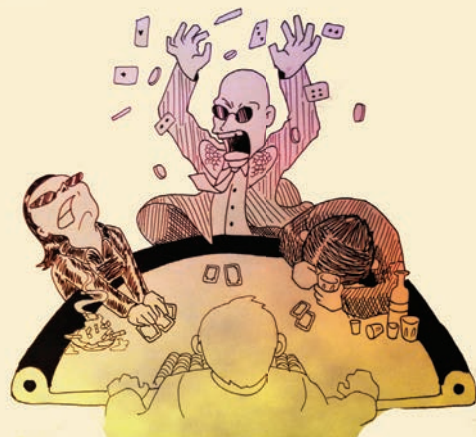
Only one floor of M8trix’s eight is open. There’s nowhere for escape. No floor to go for a fresh start, no karaoke.

I want karaoke!

I’m hungry and my choices are a burger and fries at the sports bar, or a bowl of pho at the noodle bar. No promised gourmet food made clearly available to keep that mojito company.

Around midnight, I find the place I always find when I’m uncomfortable in a situation: huddled over an ashtray, which happened to be outside next to the Bentley. A fellow refuge seeking escape from the casino, a businessman named Craig from Seattle joins me. We share our disappointment in the M8trix while sharing solace in our cigarettes.

Sadly, that moment was the highlight of my evening at Casino M8trix.



Casino M8trix purchased the Garden City Casino in 2009, one of the two card clubs allowed in San Jose. The M8trix is allowed to operate in San Jose because, unlike casinos in Los Vegas, it is a card club only and gamblers bet against each other and not the house. It was scheduled to open April 8 of this year, but experienced contentious delays when San Jose’s police chief failed to grant it a card room permit. This delay left roughly 700 hired employees, 400 of whom were absorbed from Garden City, unemployed for four months until it opened August 7. In late September, the M8trix filed a lawsuit against the City of San Jose to recoup their losses.